



Monarch Butterfly

Danaus plexippus



The monarch is an incredible butterfly. It spends the spring and summer months in North America. When autumn comes, it travels thousands of miles south to Mexico. It then spends the entire winter hibernating; only to wake up in the spring to travel all the way back again!



Migration

The monarch migrates further than any other butterfly. What's even more amazing is that it takes four generations of monarchs for this to happen – the creatures only live for a few months. That means it will take a monarch butterfly's great grandchild to complete the entire journey over the year!

Milkweed is the only plant monarchs eat when they are caterpillars and they don't grow in Mexico. That's why it's important for the butterfly to fly back north to USA and Canada where there's lots of it. The monarch will then lay its eggs here. Caterpillars gorge on these tasty green leaves for about two weeks before it forms a chrysalis. That's when its transformation into a butterfly begins.



1. Where do monarch butterflies spend the winter?



2. **Caterpillars gorge on these...** What does 'gorge' mean?



3. Why do monarchs fly back to USA and Canada in spring?



4. What makes the monarch butterfly so 'incredible' and 'amazing'? List **three** reasons.

- _____
- _____
- _____



The Great Migration



"We're not going to make it!" Meena shouted above the roar of the wind.

"Yes we are!" Mondo shouted back. Another strong gust hit Meena, knocking her off-course. For a moment, she lost sight of her best friend. "Mondo!" she cried out.

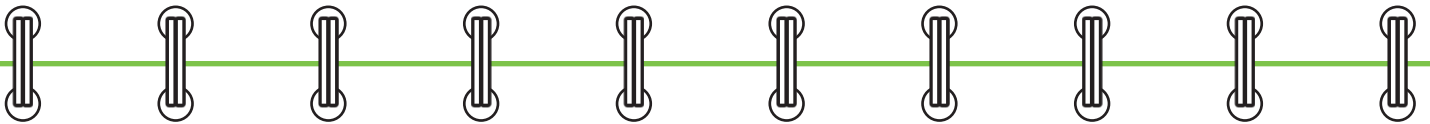
"I'm here," he replied, swooping between the other butterflies.

They had been travelling for weeks now, searching for a safe place for Meena to lay her eggs. The elder butterflies said it was important to leave their Mexican home in the Michoacan Mountains as there would be nothing for her babies to eat when they hatched. The entire colony – over 100 million monarch butterflies – had set off on an incredible journey: a migration her ancestors had been doing for years.

"There!" Mondo suddenly shouted. His antennae were pointing down through the misty rain and cloud. "Milkweed!" Meena laughed as thousands of monarchs glided towards their species' favourite plant.

Meena fluttered from leaf to leaf, laying her precious eggs. "It's been a long journey," she sighed.

"So sleepy..." Mondo agreed, yawning. They snuggled up together. They were so tired and now all the eggs were safely laid all they wanted to do was to fall into a deep, deep sleep. "I'm so proud of you," Mondo whispered. Meena smiled, nuzzling her head into his wings, and the two monarch butterflies, having fulfilled their role in the cycle of life, drifted slowly away...



1. Where had Meena and Mondo flown from?



2. **For a moment, she lost sight of her best friend. "Mondo!" she cried out.**

How do you think Meena was feeling?



3. How many butterflies were in the colony?



4. At the end, it says the two butterflies 'drifted slowly away'. What do you think the author means by this?

Butterfly, Butterfly

Butterfly, butterfly,
how do you grow?
By eating and drinking,
why - didn't you know?

Butterfly, butterfly, what do you eat?
The nectar of flowers
and things that are sweet.

Butterfly, butterfly, what was before?
An egg and a larva,
the stages are four.

Butterfly, butterfly,
larva - what's that?
A wriggly caterpillar,
nice and fat.

Butterfly, butterfly,
what was then next?
A pupa; a chrysalis -
it's quite complex.

Butterfly, butterfly,
when came your wings?
They grew in my pupa -
such colourful things!

Butterfly, butterfly, how do you fly?
By flitting and fluttering into the sky.

Butterfly, butterfly, what really are you?
An insect with six legs - there's quite a few.

Butterfly, butterfly, what will you do?
I'll start my own family, fresh and new!



1. What does the butterfly eat in the poem?



2. What is a butterfly larva?



3. **Butterfly, butterfly, how do you fly? By flitting and fluttering into the sky.**

Think of **two** different verbs you could use to replace 'flitting' and 'fluttering':

- _____
- _____



4. Read the final verse. If there was another verse following on from it, what might it be about?



Answers

Monarch Butterfly

1. Where do monarch butterflies spend the winter?

The Monarch Butterfly spends the winter in Mexico.

2. Why do monarchs fly back to USA and Canada in spring?

Pupil's own responses such as: 'It is important for monarch butterflies to return to the USA and Canada for the milkweed, as there is no milkweed in Mexico, so their young cannot eat.'

3. **Caterpillars gorge on these...**

What does 'gorge' mean?

'Gorge' means to eat greedily.

4. What makes the monarch butterfly so 'incredible' and 'amazing'? List **three** reasons.

Award three marks in total from:

- **travels thousands of miles/ migrates**
- **spends winter/hibernates in Mexico**
- **flies back north (to USA and Canada) in the spring**
- **migrates further than any other butterfly**
- **takes four generations for the migration cycle to happen/great grandchild will complete the journey**
- **transformation into a butterfly (creates a chrysalis)**

The Great Migration

1. Where had Meena and Mondo flown from?

Meena and Mondo flew from the Michoacan Mountains. (also accept Mexico)

2. How many butterflies were in the colony?

There were over 100 million butterflies in Meena and Mondo's colony.

3. **For a moment, she lost sight of her best friend. "Mondo!" she cried out.** How do you think Meena was feeling at this point in the story?

Award one mark for: worried, anxious, concerned, nervous, alone, upset, sad (or similar).

Award one extra mark if suitable reason is provided, e.g. because she thought that she had lost Mondo.

4. At the end, it says the two butterflies 'drifted slowly away'. What do you think it means by this?

Pupil's own responses such as: 'I think that Meena and Mondo fell into a deep sleep together.'

Answers

Butterfly, Butterfly

1. What does the butterfly eat in the poem?

The butterfly eats the nectar of flowers and things that are sweet.

2. What is a butterfly larva?

A butterfly larva is called a Caterpillar.

3. **Butterfly, butterfly, how do you fly?**
By flitting and fluttering into the sky.

Think of **two** different verbs you could use to replace 'flitting' and 'fluttering':

Award one mark for: gliding, flapping, flying, flashing, soaring, or any similar verb to do with the way the butterfly is moving.

4. Read the final verse. If there was another verse following on from it, what might it be about?

Award one mark for answers that address the next part of the butterfly's life: e.g. finding a mate, laying eggs, migrating.